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THE VEILED DOOR
BY CAROLINE GILTINAN



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THE
VEILED
DOOR



BY CAROLINE GILTINAN:

THE DIVINE IMAGE (1917)

THE VEILED DOOR (1929)

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By

CAROLINE GILTINAN



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BALTIMORE ARCHDIOCESE

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TO MY HUSBAND
LEO P. HARLOW

*THANKS are due to the
editors of The Catholic
World, The London Graphic,
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script, The Poetry Review, The
Queen's Work, The Poetry
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permission to reprint certain of
the following poems.*

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I
THE
GREY
DUSK

The Builder

I AM building me a secret place
With stones that cut my hands;
But I must build and build and build
Until a temple stands.

The edges of the stones are sharp
But I shall travel far
For I must seek and seek and seek
Wherever such stones are.

The Fog

S O M E T H I N G grey envelopes me
Whenever troubles come.
I wait inside a shadowy veil
Watching, silent, numb.

They always, always come this way:
I, waiting, in a mist of grey.

The Seeker

NOTHING delicate or fine
Seems to reach this soul of mine:
Only heavy harmonies,
Sudden chords that jar;
Winds blowing through a forest,
Waves breaking on a bar.

So I seek for silence
Where the secrets are:
Silence like the moonlight
Or a falling star.

Duration

HE who says that Life is short
Has never suffered pain.

A night can hold eternity—
And night returns again!

Memory

FROM Sainte Chapelle to Notre Dame
Is commonplace to see;
But God ordained that city way
My road to Calvary.
My bleeding heart fell thrice three times
The while I walked upright
With some strange, secret stabbing pride
That hid the tears from sight.
Golgotha was a lonely church
Where agony may hide . . .
And there, before the Heart of God,
Mine own was crucified.

Afterward

(H. McC. G.)

ALL that I love lies sleeping
Under a new-made mound.

To-night I see the sky again:
The moon is nearly round.

Fugitive

NOT in the glare of sunlight
But in the shelter of trees
Or under crowded grasses
Known to the bandit bees:
So should a grave be hidden
When a soul has found release.

DEATH is only a passing,
Much as the seasons go,
From beauty to greater beauty
And all that we need to know.

The Courtyard Pigeons

(Philadelphia)

DEAR birds, that flutter happily
Against the grey stone wall
That hides the joyous sun from me,
Do you not hear my call?
Each weary day when you go past
To strut and perch up there,
Or when you soar away so fast,
I watch you, and I care:
For, in your iridescent flight,
My eyes have learned to see
How, in this strange and fearful night,
One thing, at least, goes free.
And do you know what you have taught
In low and cooing cries?
Though much is gone, they have not bought
The part of me that flies!

The End

T HERE can be nothing but relief
To know that death will come
And strike your bitter lips with cold
And leave them stiff and dumb.

The Barrier

SORROWS came to many;
They did not come to me.
Love's protecting tenderness
Watched eternally.

Now a sorrow is my own,
The door has opened wide.
Willingly I cross the sill
To God Who waits outside.

Grief and suffering I knew
Through a closing door
Of blinding joy and happiness:
God, give me no more!

Value

A WOUNDED eagle screams;
A woman breaks her heart.
One is cruelty;
One is Art.

Mary Fitton to Master Will Shakespeare

*"The better angel is a man right fair,
The worser spirit a woman color'd ill.
To win me soon to hell, my female evil
Tempteth my better angel from my side
And would corrupt my saint to be a devil
Wooing his purity with her foul pride."*

So long a time, and is it fair to keep
My image darkened in your bitter word
That stabs my heart, though dust, as if a sword
Turned there to wound, and made the wound more
deep?

Had I been foul, would both your angels weep?
Though the times spurned, to me a singing bird
Your vision came in music my being heard
Colored with Prospero's island-haunted sleep.

Why was I blind, when most I wished to see,
Accepting less than what was tossed away:
Unknowing then, this world beyond what seems,
This world from which you have exiled me?
Around your moods, I, as your angel, play;
And am a part of all your greatest dreams.

Kin

ONLY to blur it: the vision!
Only to feel less *alive*,
To be freed from this wish to surrender
Against which always I strive.

Why does my heart fight against me?
For succor, I reach out my hand
To her whom they stoned in Samaria . . .
Strange, but we two *understand!*

Achievement

THE biggest thing I ever did
Was all inside of me,
There was a battle, hardly won,
With only God to see.

When I plucked out the flaming brand
Whose evil light shone through,
The place it burned was black and charred . . .
But no one ever knew.

Disillusioned

LEAVES already dying fall
Back of your dear head
And I who love you listen
To nothing that is said.

Let me keep my eyes on yours:
I dare not look away
Fearing again to see your feet
Cloven and of clay.

Living

CLOWN, clown, clown,
Jump through another hoop.

Clown, clown, clown,
The horse comes 'round the loop.

Clown, clown, clown,
They want to hear you sing.

Clown, clown, clown,
I know your circus ring.

Dread

THE years of wounding silence
Break, with a gasping moan:
Time-coming, where's your armour
Against the thought—"Alone?"

Sacrifice

TH E R E is no wine unless the grape is crushed;
There is no bread while wheat is still in
grain.

It may be that the soul can only grow
Through sorrow, and the body's pain.

The Night Watch

I HOPED until the morning
Which stealthily was born.
I creep away bewildered
With soul and body torn.

If I grow tired watching
With the sun abroad,
I hoped until the morning:
You will remember, Lord?

Noon, twilight, then the evening;
Oh, God of mercy, say!
I hoped until the morning—
Need I hope all day?

The Coward

IT lies before my wounded feet:
The cross I am to bear.
Blocking my path, it frightens me
To see it lying there.

And yet I dare not turn away,
Nor yet dare go around.
God! give me strength to carry it:
The thing upon the ground!

II
THE
MAGICIAN

Consecration

GOD ! I ask one miracle:
A baby's nestling head.
I, the chalice; Love, the wine—
Will You send the bread?

The Apparition

SHE came to me again last night:
That vision strangely sweet
With unbound hair, a gown of white
And bare and silent feet.

She came to ask some gift of me
With all her lovely charm.
What did she hold so carefully
Within her bended arm?

Her eyes again made mute appeal.
They rob me of all rest!
Would I could understand, or see
What lay against her breast.

Escape

OH ! let me go where no children are !
Somewhere, there must be a lonely star
Where I could see no children at all—
Never be near one, or hear one call.

To such a place I must go, must go,
Away from the hunger that tears me so ;
I would escape from each little lad
So like the child that I never had.

Somewhere, oh, somewhere !
One lonely star :
Oh ! let me go where no children are !

The Invader

You hide in the bed of lilies;
The hollyhocks shield you, sweet;
A mass of conscious pansies
Is trod by your unseen feet.

And I who kneel here weeding
Pretend that I do not see
Your elfin, baby beauty
Always evading me.

Another year, I shall hold you,
A helpless ball of a thing,
Captured, guarded and worshipped,
Most glorious growth of the Spring!

The Magician

(To Faith, my daughter.)

No longer have I fear of falling leaves
Nor pity for a fluttering leaf alone;
I can rejoice as if the seed new-sown
Were pushing through.
And yet, the whole world grieves.
No heartbreak now to watch the sodden sheaves
And no regret that summer birds have flown,
For in this nest one little bird, my own,
Has banished dread of slowly dripping eaves.

Autumn but a season as lovely as the rest!
Miracles grow commonplace since she found my
breast.

To be Read by Faith Harlow When Eighteen

PERHAPS some day I shall tell you
That, in my youth, we did not do
Some newly dressed but ancient thing
That time and your own youth may bring.

Years robbing me may make you wise,
So, daughter with the violet eyes,
If it should come, this after while,
I hope you kiss me, dear ; then smile.

Chips

ON brooks and rivers, creeks and streams,
Were logs and rafts and chips afloat;
But on some shore, dreaming its dreams,
A worthless chip said: "I'm a boat.
To mid-stream waters I must go;
Here the eddies only play,
There I'll feel the ebb and flow.
I think I'll make the trip today."

Yet, the shore line held it fast,
Helpless, hopeless, always twirled,
And the hurrying boats went past
While the chip unceasing swirled.
Then he came—a little child—
To the bank to sail a ship
And, with rapture almost wild,
He saw one in the lonely chip.

With boyish, laughing, shouting joy
He worked to set the new boat loose;
It sailed, a bobbing, happy toy—
A chip that realized its use.

And I, a woman, idly float
Quite near the shore, a useless chip.
I pray a Child who wants a boat
May take me as His waiting ship.

III
BEYOND
THE
SKIES

The Visitor

DE COROUSLY I followed
When they led me past your door;
A closed door on a hallway—
That, and nothing more.
But my heart was wildly beating
(Though I knew you were away)
At thought of that dear other time
When you bade me stay.
Love flashed into my finger-tips;
I lingered in the hall
And, passing, touched the heavy door
I touched it—that was all.
But had I dared to open it,
Or dared to breathe your name,
I would have gone within, Beloved,
And waited till you came!

Duality

YOU touch me as you would a child,
The child of me a part,
And yet, the hands that hold my face
Are tearing at my heart.

The Quest

WANTING so the Face divine,
I search within this soul of mine.
But there the Image is so dim:
There seems to be no trace of Him.

Weary of heart, with faith grown weak,
Again, the vanished Face I seek.
Lo! in my need, God sends me *thee*:
And from thy soul, He smiles on me.

S H A D O W S touch like tenderness;
Passionate is light.

Day is strong and obvious:
Oh, shield me, blessed night!

The Breeze

S O M E T H I N G touched me as I passed
Beneath the silent trees;
A soft caress against my lips;
It may have been a breeze.

With it came the thought of you
And all that now you mean.
A wandering wind, or was it you,
A messenger unseen?

The lovely leaves grew very still;
They did not dance or play.
Nor did my heart, for in a breath,
The breeze had gone away.

The Red Wing

I ENVIED once a bird's red wing—
The hidden, flashing, flaming thing.
And through my life with vibrant ring
The soul of me began to sing.

The Call

A ROBIN calls: "Come, sweet, my mate!"
Believing she will hear.
Within the tree's new leafy green,
A fluttering bit of joy unseen,
She answers low and clear
A few sweet notes.

And one who hears
Turns sobbingly away
Her heart a wild, awakened thing
Of poignant pain—for robins sing
The meaning of the May.

Absence

BRAVE as the brave, I meet the day
Holding every thought at bay—
Of you, away.

But suddenly it stabs me through—
My dear and desperate need of you
When pigeons coo.

Surrender

IN the pale, murmuring dawn she lay
Alone, with nothing more to lose.
Her eyes one soft white arm espied
And lips too tired to voice her pride
Caressed and kissed a bruise.

New Happiness

BELIEVING was not difficult
When pain and grief were near
Before these strange and golden days
Had made me yours, my dear.

But now I doubt the verity
Of everything I see:
Am I awake or dreaming—
What is reality?

These trees in snow, all beauty,
Perhaps they are not true?
I do not care, if I may keep
This vividness of you.

Interpreted

Now I know why ivy
Climbs against the wall
Striving to be graceful,
Green and always tall.
Now I see why swallows
Sweep across the sky
In their swift excitement
Shrilling as they fly.
Now I hear all music says;
What streams are murmuring.
Now I know why gardens grow
And birds forever sing.
All of earth and heaven,
God's grandeur, with the rest,
I see in flashing worship
While I lie against your breast.

Aftermath

ABOVE my heart, beneath my breast
Where your dear head has lain,
Why did the lips that promised rest
Leave this exquisite pain?

The Disguise

I WONDER at the afterwhile
When God takes one away;
Will not the lonely soul return
In wind, or fog, or spray?
Or in the swelling buds of Spring,
Or on the April rain?
I only know, to be with you,
I will come back again!

Hearing Kreisler

WERE I shut away from sound,
Melody no more to know,
My starving ears would ask my eyes
To watch the rhythm of his bow.

Beyond the Skies

I.

WHEN all of living here is done
And death obscures the final sun
Though I be gone, would you not care
To know the joy I wish for there?
If heaven holds full many things
Other than the angel-wings,
I ask a day like one of these
With bright new grass and leafy trees;
A valley where cloud shadows fall
Against a wooded mountain wall;
A warm blue sky, a stony stream,
A silent place where we may dream,
In time that kindly lengthens so,
When you have come, you never go.

II.

It is so sweet to share with you
The greatest work God lets me do.
We can watch the twilight fall
With no regret for day at all.
And I feel in each caress
A strange recurrent happiness
And the breathless, hungry bliss
Born of every ardent kiss.
Your living self, your hair, your hands,
The flashing mind that understands;
Your dear and sudden tenderness,
The bravery of eyes that bless;
I want this perfect whole above:
Earth cannot hold enough of love!

Unarmoured

TH E S E hours that I throw away—
What would I give for one
If you were lying newly dead,
Eternity begun?

Alone in Spring

I NEVER met the Spring alone before—
The flowers, birds, the loveliness of trees,
For with me always there was one I love,
And love is shield against such gifts as these.

But now I am alone, alone,
The days and nights one long remembering.
Did other Aprils that we shared possess
The hurting beauty of this living Spring?

I never met the Spring alone before:
My starving grief, this radiance of gold!
To be alone, when Spring is being born,
One should be dead—or suddenly grown old.

IV
THE
GARDEN

Over Night, a Rose

THAT over night a rose could come
I one time did believe,
For when the fairies live with one,
They wilfully deceive.
But now I know this perfect thing
Under the frozen sod,
In cold and storm grew patiently
Obedient to God.
My wonder grows since knowledge came
Old fancies to dismiss;
And courage comes. Was not the rose
A winter doing this?
Nor did it know, the weary while,
What color and perfume
With this completed loveliness
Lay in that earthy tomb.
So maybe I, who cannot see
What God wills not to show,
May some day bear a rose for Him
It took my life to grow.

An Etching

NEW-LEAFED once in vivid green;
Soon to be a rotting log.
Majesty is yours between,
Black, gaunt tree against the fog.

A Portrait

LIKE a dear old lady
Dressed in soft brown cashmere,
Sitting with quiet, folded hands,
Content and peaceful,
And smiling a mysterious promise
My winter garden waits.

Symbols

A BAR of Chopin,
Willows in new leaf,
White blossoms on black bough,
Pink and gold of sunset,
All art thou!

The Garden

WHAT makes a garden?
Flowers, grass and trees,
Odour, grace and colour:
Lovely gifts like these.

What makes a garden
And why do gardens grow?
Love lives in gardens;
God and lovers know!

Presence

IN a wild and silent garden
Where flowers sway and nod,
The miracle of odour
Brings me the Breath of God.

The Miracle

S HINE with the sun on the bright new leaves
Of your lovely and leafy dress.
During the months you were stark and bare,
Beaten by winds and shivering there,
Tree, did you ever guess?

The Shower

LI F T E D stems of rain-washed green:
"Sursum Corda!" sings the grass.
Fragrant flowers sway and lean
While the garden goes to Mass.

Transformed

BLACK and naked branches
Always searching one,
You await the coming
Of your lord, the sun.
Warmed with all his grandeur,
Suddenly some day
He who holds your worship
Will achieve his way.

In the glow of Springtime
(The sun is very wise!)
Turn and see within you
With fascinated eyes,
Wonderful as music
Green leaves and moving boughs.
In your thousand blossoms,
Mating birds will house.

Hidden in your branches
Where you shield one nest,
Tree of strange surprises
The sun will find your breast.

Spring

SPRING! and the buds against the sky:
Heart, forget that you saw
The little brown bird that fluttered by:
The bird with the wisp of straw.

V
BETHLEHEM
AND
CALVARY

Annunziata

FOR you, his message changed all life
When Gabriel came that strange spring day.
And when God's angel went away,
In you, the joy supreme was rife.
Thus did the angel prophesy:
A maid to bear a Baby Son!
The Child of God, your little One,—
Did Gabriel say how He would die
After the passion you would share?
And did he tell you, Mother-maid,
Of tortured soul and heart afraid?
O, Spouse of God, did Gabriel dare?

Christmas Eve

MARY of Nazareth, undefiled,
In Bethlehem's falling snow
Bringing to us the Holy Child,
Where, Mother of God, can you go?

Are we as heartless and blind to-day
And, in our hearts, is sin
Turning you and your Son away:
No room again at the Inn?

The Interlude

WHILE all of earth and all of heaven
Were seeking for the Baby's place,
A happy twain were guarding Him
Illumined by Love's mystic grace.
When Mary felt His little hand
Around one slender finger cling
She smiled, and meeting Joseph's eyes,
Forgot to hear the angels sing.
When Joseph kissed her lovely lips,
A sudden light fell on the stall
Where they assumed the sacred trust—
The God they held was very small!
To Joseph, Mary and the Child
No later day was quite the same
As when He lay so helpless there—
The time before the shepherds came.

The First Christmas

MOTHER of the new-born God
Hide your grief away
For His tiny, fumbling hands
On your face may stray;

And searching so, your eyes may touch:
He must not find them wet!
Mother of the Baby God,
For this one day, *forget!*

The Crib

LITTLE Baby, Jesus Christ,
Of Virgin Mother born,
Will You make this heart of mine
Your crib on Christmas morn?

My mothering You will not want—
Full measure Mary gives!
There is no need of guarding care
While loving Joseph lives.

The beasts around will lend You warmth;
Each creature fill some need.
Oh, make my heart your manger-crib:
It will forget to bleed!

Pilgrimage

W I S E Men, Wise Men, Wise Men!
More than ever wise
Seeking for the stable
Where a Baby lies.

Wise Men, Wise Men, Wise Men,
He has small need of you,
He Who is all wisdom,
Beautiful and true.

Wise Men, Wise Men, Wise Men!
Do not pass me by:
Jesus of the Manger
Pities such as I.

CH RIST, who knows all sorrow,
Had more than grief to bear
When He blest the children
And touched a baby's hair.

Victory

(Tours : November 11, 1918)

I LAUGHING, try to sing my joy,
For France, dear France, is *free!*
(A widow clasps her trembling hands
And smiles, through tears, at me.)

I gather close the tricolor,
(Oh! visioned, murdered child!)
Embracing so the men of France
Who, through the years, have fled
Across the fields and back again.
It was not *all* "Advance!"
Retreating was long agony
While keeping faith with France.
The ravished girls and women
Whose eyes were once so clear—
I sing my song the louder,
Their story not to hear.

If grief be ours, we may rejoice:
Be mute, unless you know
The happiness and anguish
These people undergo.
The fighting now is over
And fear of further loss;
But France can see It hanging there—
A Figure on a Cross.
For France—France *knows* that Mary felt
And John (who loved her Son)
When Jesus died, a Sacrifice. . . .
Another victory won!

Communion

MOTHER MARY, you I see
Bringing Him, your Babe, to me;
And you say, with tender smile:
"Hold Him, dear, a little while."
Mother Mary, pity me,
For He struggles to be free!
My heart, my arms, He finds defiled:
I am unworthy of the Child.
Mary, Mother, charity!
Let your Baby stay with me.

Gifts

HE gave me knowledge of evil
Agony and sin;
But He gave me love for a flower,
For words, and a violin.

Respite

BY cowardice and terror,
A little soul lay torn
Believing this her Calvary:
The pressure of one thorn.

God watched with patient pity
While she grew weak and pale
And deeper, deeper pressed the thorn
Withholding still the nail.

Epiphany

To the Babe of Bethlehem
There came three ancient Kings
Who laid before His manger-crib
Their rare and precious things.

Freely, I render up to Him
The frankincense and gold;
But this, the other gift of myrrh,
My clinging hands withhold.

Betrayal

JUDAS sought the Master out.
Then, guiding angry foe,
He kissed the cheek of Jesus Christ
Before he turned to go.

The treachery was wholly vile.
What could be worse than this:
To slay the Source of Love, Itself,
By Love's dear sign, a kiss?

When Darkness Covered the Earth

GUILTY with blood of the Sinless One
And tortured by memory,
Three wretched men, when the night had run,
Travelled from Calvary.

Sharing their grief and bitter fear,
Since hatred had gone with the sun,
Each man asked, though he shuddered to hear,
What work the others had done.

"I am the one who plaited
The crown of briar and thorn.
God! how His hair was matted!
God! how His head was torn!"

"And I, when He asked, denied Him
A draught from my brimming grail."

"Woe, woe unto me, I despised Him
And drove through His hand the nail."

Triumph

JESUS dying on the Cross,
They who love Him waiting near,
Magdalene foresees her loss
With vision torturing and clear.
But while He lives, no time for grief!
His agony she shares anew;
Helpless she to give relief—
Nothing, nothing, can she do!
But now she looks into His eyes:
With wavering hands, she feels her hair.
Love will make a woman wise,
And love Himself is hanging there.
Underneath the Cross she kneels,
Her hair beneath His bleeding feet,
And when the precious weight she feels,
Her sudden smile is strangely sweet.
The pillowing gold turns dark and wet
But motionless she stays to hold
His pain. And now, the sun has set . . .
And now, the feet are cold.

MARY, Mother of Jesus,
Did you always know,
Guarding His lovely childhood,
What He must undergo?

To all the years were holding,
Were you as blind as I,
Wanting only to keep Him,
For Life to crucify?

Identity

BETRAYER of the Master,
He sways against the sky
A black and broken body,
Iscaiot—or I?

On Calvary

(D. G.)

ONCE you journeyed with Him, Mary,
With your Son Who died for me,
Sharing all He had to suffer
On the way to Calvary.

With the expiation over,
When they laid Him on your breast,
Did a little gladness tremble
That, at last, your Son could rest?

Mother Mary, had you comfort
Though He lay there, dead and torn,
Taking from the Head of Jesus
That embedded crown of thorn?

Easter

BETHLEHEM and Calvary:
What more could God have said
Except the one astounding truth:
"Arisen from the dead!"

The Revealer

TIME was I saw Christ's body
And could not understand
The thorn-crowned head, the bleeding feet,
The nail that pierced each hand.

But Life came by, and then I knew:
Oh, blood from God's own side,
I know and shall forever know
How Love is crucified.

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Giltinan, Caroline.
The veiled door.

REPLACEMENT CARD

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Giltinan, Caroline
The veiled door



